

ICYMI -- Administrator Criswell Highlights FEMA Efforts at the White House Tribal Nations Summit

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WASHINGTON -- On Dec. 7, FEMA leaders attended the [White House Tribal Nations Summit](#). They were joined by more than 300 Tribal Nation leaders and representatives from agencies across the government.

FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell delivered remarks that highlighted FEMA's efforts to improve Tribal Nations' access to the agency's resources. "Today, I am proud to reflect on the progress we've made over the past year to build the FEMA that Indian Country needs and deserves," said Administrator Criswell. "Together we've made incredible strides -- but we still have a lot of work to do to make sure that we at FEMA are living up to our treaty and trust responsibilities."

During her remarks, the Administrator outlined policy changes, clarifications and updates that support Tribal Nations, including:

Clarification of Public Assistance Eligibility

Roads on tribal lands that were either built or maintained by the Bureau of Indian Affairs or the Department of Transportation are eligible to be repaired through FEMA's Public Assistance programs. This clarification removes a roadblock that left many Tribal Nations unable to access their homes and businesses after a disaster.

Simplifying Damage Assessments

When traditional tribal residences and tribal ceremonial buildings are damaged, Tribal Nations will now be able to self-certify the damage assessment and scope of work for restoring those traditional structures. This will allow FEMA to more accurately account for damage and to repair traditional and ceremonial structures on tribal lands, such as pueblos, long houses and more.



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Respecting Tribal Sacred Sites

FEMA is working to ensure that Tribal Nation data and coordinates of culturally sensitive locations, remains confidential. The agency will do this by no longer requiring photos, site maps or specific location details of damage done to tribal sacred sites.

Increasing Tribal Nation Input

FEMA plans to include more Tribal Nation input on recovery policies by increasing their participation in Public Assistance Working Sessions and Steering Committees. The agency will also work to hire more staff from Indian Country, while also increasing tribal-specific training for FEMA staff.

Launch of FEMA's Tribal Affairs Hub

Administrator Criswell announced the launch of the first [FEMA Tribal Affairs Hub](#), where Tribal Nations can learn more about [FEMA grants](#), [tribal disaster declarations](#), register for trainings and more.

Reminder of Upcoming Tribal Nation Training

Registration is open [for the 9th Annual Tribal Nations Training Week](#) (TNTW) at FEMA's Center for Domestic Preparedness taking place March 9-16, 2024. In 2022, more than 200 leaders, emergency managers and responders from more than 70 Tribal Nations participated in the 8th Annual TNTW. The TNTW is only **open to non-federal employees who work for Tribal Nations and Indian Health Service staff.**

During the Summit, the Administrator, National Tribal Affairs Advocate [Kelbie Kennedy](#) and National Tribal Affairs Advisor Jay LaPlante hosted a closed-door nation-to-nation conversation and breakout session with tribal leaders.

Discussion topics ranged from building Tribal Nation resiliency long term, updating the tribal disaster declarations, access to FEMA grants, fire suppression in Indian Country, translating emergency messaging into Native languages and more.

The following senior FEMA leaders participated in the breakout:



- U.S. Fire Administrator [Dr. Lori Moore-Merrell](#);
- Associate Administrator for Response and Recovery [Anne Bink](#);
- Public Assistance Division Director Robert Pesapane;
- Chief Financial Officer [Mary Comans](#);
- Assistant Administrator of the Grants Program Directorate [Pamela Williams](#);
- National Continuity Programs Associate Administrator [Michael George](#);
- Director of External Affairs [Justin Knighten](#); and
- Associate Administrator of Mission Support [Eric Leckey](#).

Watch the [proceedings of the White House Tribal Nations Summit](#), including the administrator's full remarks.



Tribal leaders meeting with FEMA Administrator Criswell and National Tribal Affairs Advocate Kelbie Kennedy (center).



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